566 [B-23] At the bottom of the social pyramid of land tenure was the "gabbar", the peasant, whose status resembled that of the medieval European serf. In the final step of passing tasks along, he was responsible for carrying them out, though he could shift some manual labor to the slaves under his constant supervision. The gabbar owed regular statute-labor (called "kudād" or "hudād", literally painful labor), resembling the medieval European corvee, and could also be called out for any special labor. At any moment, authority could decree that a bridge was to be built, a church to be constructed or repaired, at an appointed time and place. Thereupon every gabbar would have to appear, carrying his own tools, to work under the direction os the feudal officer, governor, or his lieutenants ("mislanē"). Heavy fines punished failure to appear for this labor.

It is peculiar, perhaps, how this system was internalized by the gabbar. If he was not on good enough terms with his neighbors to call on them for mutual aid, e.g. in housebuilding or harvesting, perhaps due to a quarrel between kin units, he could demand such aid by appealing to the "cheqa shum" (village headman) or governor's lieutenants, who would then proclaim the work as an official [B89] task. The penalty for failure to appear, however, was milder; the offender was sentenced to donate a great feast to all the other participants.

566 794 Another noteworthy traditional task emphasized the feudal structure of the church. A priest in charge of periodic services, the "master of the chant", could de-

566 mand of the feudal lord that deacons, choir-boys with
794 good voices, be supplied to him. The "gultanna" could be made responsible for this, and would search the countryside for likely peasant boys. For his service in acting as music critic in examining the boys, and as their trainer, the "master of the chant" would receive a specified number of baskets of grain from the feudal lord, who, of course, passed this extra expense on down the line until the bill was finally footed by the peasant gabbar.

566 The term "gabbar" itself is closely related (perhaps derived from) "gebber", feast (especially feasting of guest by noblemen, or soldiers after victory). Indeed, it is the gabbar who supplies the materials for the feasts.

[242] In view of this regular as well as irregular exploitation, it is not surprising that the gabbar did not try to improve the land he worked, and to this day leaves more fields fallow than he works in any given year. A rank above him, the "gultanna" suffered from insecure tenure. Above him loomed the authority of the feudal warlord ("färäsänya") and the shadow of landowning monasteries and parish churches. Their power, in turn, varied inversely with the power, or weakness, of the "king of kings".

423 Such types of land tenure arose in the past when a king awarded land for personal service, or in gratitude, as "gult" land, without specifying the conditions under which such land might pass to the heirs of the recipient.

423 794 Land donated to the church, in areas far from a monastery or parish that could easily administer it, sometimes belong in this category. In gratitude for victory, a king would sometimes establish ecclesiastical fiefs, "rim", for the support of officiating priests and boy deacons. The most famous endowment of this kind occurred in 1270 A.D., when archbishop Täklä Haymanot received 1/3 of the land of Abyssinia from the "Solomonic Dynasty" he had helped to restore. The archbishop immediately founded monasteries to administer the property and to supervise the "gabbar on it. Priests and monks since then have served in functions similar to chaplains, and have carried the "tabot" representing the sacred ark, into battles, much like the priests of the ancient Israelites. Endowments have continued to add land to the church, "mäsqäl märet" (lit. lands of the cross), and a priest is usually sent to act as local administrator, "aläqa" (lit, chief). He also supervises the functioning of a church built on land not given to the church, and often acts as if the surrounding land were "gult" land belonging to the church.

[713]

The moral power of the church in many localities is so strong that the borderlines between "rest" and "gult" may become hazy. Aging persons often try to

donate some plots to the church as "s̄amonanya", to have masses read for their souls after their deaths. Widows, who often take vows as nuns, try to endow the church if they can. Sometimes, "gulten̄nas" threatened with expropriation, sought the protection of the church, so that they could remain on their lands. Sometimes parish priests practice nepotism by inviting their nephews or other kinsmen to settle on endowed land surrounding the parish church, without paying rent or performing heavy labors. In return, this arrangement serves the local priests as life insurance and income-insurance, for they will always be certain of supplies of produce, beer, meat, incense, clothing, etc., from their grateful kinfolk, for themselves and their offspring.

The local priest then also acts as patron of his kinfolk against the regional administration, interceding for them when they become involved in litigation, acts as their "guarantor" ("was") when they apply for jobs or seek more land from the governor or neighboring landlord. This nepotism actually seems on the increase, since the present emperor abrogated the feudal rights of all church lands in 1942 (though reinstituting some in exchange for services such as education, a few years later). Now that the church has lost the right to charge feudal rent, parish priests are more eager than ever to have kinfolk settle around them, to avoid dependence on payment from parents whose boys are enrolled in the church school.

794 Local personnel in the parish church included boys from 10 to 15, who are usually more reliable church students, dressed in fine church garments, with good voices and the ability to memorize liturgy. They carry the cross and other utensils in parade, and act as ritual aides in many capacities. They are called "diyakon" (deacon). When they reach puberty, indicated as soon as their voices break and they become awkward adolescents, the possibility of sexual involvement automatically cancels their position (and the gifts from the priests).

Because of the sacerdotal emphasis, worship is performed in a temple atmosphere, churches are open only during services, and there is no preaching. Thus church officials are absent from the building most of the time, leaving the key to the heavy wooden door in charge of a semi-lay caretaker.

793 He is often a däbtära, who can be regarded as semi-clergy, though he has neither ecclesiastical recognition nor tenure of office. Yet his function in the church, as scribe, translator of Geez to Amharic, chorister of devotional poetry ("qëné"), religious poet, herbologist and physician of sorts, writer of amulets, etc., renders his participation as essential to the formal clergy as to the common people.

He must have a good voice capable of endurance, ecstatic pitch, rythm and melody. He must be more intelligent and learned than the priest, so that he can understand and explain and translate what he reads in Geez and Amharic. He has no salary and no right to the tithe, but the priest may allocate a portion to him. Often

788 the chest. The church is then "saluted" by kissing the wall, a ceremony called "säläm" in Geez. If the person wears sandals, he must remove them before entering the church itself.

[211] On the path near the church, or leading to it, there is often a conical pile of small rocks. This may indicate a church on a nearby hilltop, and this pile, "mäsaläläniya", functions then as a poster of salutation. If the passerby is in a hurry on another errand, he may simply bow deeply in the direction of the church instead of going there to kiss the wall. In modern times truck-drivers will bow in that direction without stopping.

794 The individual layman usually belongs to a private sodality that holds private communion together. But he may, more informally, invite some personal friends on his personal Saint's day, especially his namesake's. Since this informal private communion is cheaper, costing only the price of a jar of beer and some roasted grain, it is more popular among the poor than the formal "mähabber" sodality. The informal private communion, called "zekert", is shared only by men, uses no drummer, no expensive wheat bread, no collection for a common purse, and usually only the personal confessor is invi-

[554] ted from among the priesthood. But the zekert cannot be used as a means of gaining social prestige.

795 e) Religious Syncretism.

Surrounded by Muslim and "pagan" religions, and

[533] usually a Coptic Amhara, of more talent than skill.
286 The weaver, "shamani", though usually a Ethiopian Muslim (or Falasha), carries on his work in theopen, and anyone may learn it. It is only because it requires consistent manual labor that most Amhara shun,it.

d) Religious Minority.

794 The foremost religious minority in Amhara provinces is that of the Ethiopian Muslims. Most of them live in towns, and in the past were residentially segregated to the older parts of town, near caravan trails andbig markets. Even today, their social associations are almost exclusively with other Muslims, e.g. traders from the Sudan. Both are regarded as low-class not only by the Amhara but also by the handful of Arab wholesale traders from Yemen. As a result, negroid and amei-negroid ex-
[47] slaves (Shanqalla), especially women, often become converted to Islam in order to marry Ethiopian Muslims or Sudanese, who, as retail traders, are economically better off. The Muslim veneer of these women is very thin, and they are among the most ardent followers of the "Zar" cult.

e) Racial Minority

563 Shanqalla slaves were, [redacted], entirely below
567 the social scale, and treated as a separate caste. They were brought or purchased from the Shanqalla, negroid, people on the southwest escappment, or from Nilotic

1: Messing E-5 (1953-1954)1957 MP5 Amhara MP5

776 Foreign observers, citing early European parallels, have often
174 wondered whether the Christian Church of Abyssinia has replaced the
797 pre-Christian spirits with angels and saints, denoting the pre-Christian spirits to demons. Except for the "ganyen"- where this attempt is still far from successful - only one foreign scholar has traced such a replacement, in Abyssinia. While studying the celebrations of the Birth of the Holy Virgin in Abyssinia, he noticed certain features which led him to think that his holiday is used to obliterate an old "pagan" cult of outdoor spirits. [127]

Thus the predominant factor is still one of syncretism.

756 E. The Characteristic Significance of Amhara Healing of the Spirit.

The Abyssinian practitioner of magic is first and predominantly a healer (with the minor exception of the despised tänqway sorcerer). He is a healer of individual patients, rather than of society.

171 Thus the social significance is at most secondary. The only
[182] exception, the "zar society", is primarily "group therapy". There is only tangential contact with political, legal, administrative institutions and their function. This is very different from the "society of sorcerers" among the Bemba of Northeast Rhodesia, who hold the people in terror and exercise political power. [128]

[794 While the "zar societies" are female-dominated in quantity of
562] members and in leadership, males are by no means excluded. They therefore differ considerably from the "female witches society" among the Nupe of Northern Nigeria. [129]

171 The only close parallel between Amhara concepts of magic and
754 other African concepts of magic is between the "buda" complex of the

127. Tubiana, J.: Un Culte des Génies Agreste en Ethiopia". Rassegna di Studi Etiopici, Vol. XIII, pp. 76-90. December 1954
128. Richards, A.I.: A Modern Movement of Witchfinders. Africa, Vol. 8, No. 4, 1935
129. Nadel, S.F.: Witchcraft and Anti-Witchcraft in Nupe Society. ibid

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

346 north-west of Zanjira near the upper margin of the sheet. The church clings to the side of a steep little hill which stands almost isolated among vast gorges and commands the grandest panorama imaginable of this tormented country. The hill is joined to Zanjira by a narrow causeway little lower than the general plateau, flat on top and dropping away in cliffs on either side, so regular that it almost seems artificial. Harris records a saying which evidently refers to this place: "from Iteghe you can see the Echeghe" (*i.e.* the chief of the monks, who then lived in Gondar). To be sure, one does seem to overlook a great part of the world from this point of vantage.

[787] Every church is the centre of a radiating system of small paths (not shown on the map) chiefly used by people coming to service. There are of course 796 regular Sunday services, but these are not very well attended. More important are the special festivals observed on certain dates of the Ethiopian month, which may fall on any day of the week. In this area the monthly festivals universally observed, on which no work could be done, were those of St. Michael, St. Mary, and St. George, on the 12th, 21st, and 23rd respectively, as well as "Bal Wold," a commemoration of the Birth of Christ, on the 29th of each month. Of still greater significance in the life of the people are the annual festivals, falling on the same day of the month as the monthly ones but in certain months only. On these annual festivals nearly the whole population makes its way to the churches dedicated to the particular saint [783] commemorated. Often they will visit the local *tebel* or Holy Water and bathe there early in the morning before service. Going on to the church, all remain outside, for there would be no room for such a crowd within the cramped passages of the church itself. In the middle of the morning the *tabot* or ark is brought out and ceremonial dances held before it. Finally, before the service ends, it will be carried three times round the church in procession, attended by magnificent crosses and gaudy umbrellas. These are occasions of great popular excitement and rejoicing, and the congregations are often enormous. The long service over, they break up into gossiping groups, and go back to social lunches in each other's huts.

771 Enough has been said to show how large a part is played among these people by the Church and its priesthood. The country has indeed been described as priest-ridden, the people as over-dominated or even enslaved by the Church. If so, this servitude, at least in the country, is still a willing and unquestioned one. It is also true to say that without the Church the social structure of this countryside would fall to pieces, and life would lose not only its coherence but nearly all its variety and colour.

346 It was mentioned above that, to meet the needs of an increasing plateau 794 population, several new churches had been founded in recent times in the area covered by the map. Two of these were established by "division" of a 578 church which already existed in the gorge. Each original church had two *tabots* one of which was removed for the new foundation, for no church can exist without a *tabot* or altar-slab, this being the only part of the church which is consecrated. Thus the Mariam of the Tallak Amba plateau was derived from the Mariam half-way down the cliff about a mile to the north-east; and similarly a new Ghiorghis of the plateau, just east of Daloti, from the Ghiorghis in the gorge below. Of these "divisions," both of which took place

3: Buxton Y-5 (1946-1948)1949 MP5 Amhara MP5

shortly before the Italian invasion of 1935, the first was accomplished peacefully; but not the second. According to the story told me, the *tabot* of the lower Ghiorghis had been borrowed and carried in solemn procession on the plateau in order to ward off a swarm of locusts which were damaging the crops there. This measure was successful, and the plateau people determined to keep the *tabot* which had proved itself so powerful. The people of the gorge would not agree, and tried to recapture their *tabot*. The plateau party however successfully defended it by force of arms, and later built a little church to house it. It was not unusual to attribute specific powers to *tabots*: for instance, that of Dimbaro Mariam (a little east of the north-east corner of the sheet) used to be carried to war by the emperors, attended by a retinue of priests and scribes, to bring success in battle.

The last church to be founded in these parts was the new St. Gabriel, on a prominent hill-top in the district of Dilila near the south-east corner of the sheet. I came upon it when first following the upper course of the Beressa in December 1946. As I approached the foot of the hill I learnt from passers-by that a new church had been built upon it, and that the foundress herself, a certain great lady from Addis Ababa, was at that moment on the hill. Climbing a rocky track to the top, I saw a cluster of new huts and the still unfinished building of the church. Nearby was a large canvas awning stretched rather clumsily between rough stone walls. Under the awning I found the lady herself, short and stout and genial, sitting on a camp chair; around her, squatting on the ground, was a deferential assembly of local dignitaries, personal retainers and priests. After the fluster caused by my unexpected arrival had died down, I had a talk with the worthy lady who, having just presided at a mid-day meal, now plied me with very welcome refreshment. She had been born and bred in this very place. Having spent most of her life elsewhere, and somehow acquired a certain amount of wealth, she had returned in later life to her place of birth and founded this church only the year before my visit. It met a need, she said, for the area lacked a church, and no other St. Gabriel existed anywhere in the neighbourhood. As it chanced, I had come on the day after St. Gabriel's annual festival (which is the 19th of Tahisas, or, in European style, the 28th of December). She expressed great regret that I had not been present at the festival itself, when big crowds had come from Debra Berhan and from all the surrounding country.

This incident seemed to me interesting as demonstrating the tenacity of the local religious tradition in Ethiopia. After all the upheaval and disruption of Italian occupation and the Second World War, the hold of the ancient Church over the Amhara people seemed unweakened. The Church was able to extend its influence in an area not yet well served as readily as ever. It was still an appropriate act for a pious person to found a new church in a lonely place. Perhaps these things are not surprising, for the Church has been the main support and inspiration of Ethiopian unity since the earliest Christian times. It has always been the focal centre of the national sentiment, the fount of renewed resistance to aggression, the main force, in fact, which has maintained Ethiopia's independence and made of it, as Menelik himself once said, an island of Christianity in the great Islamic sea.

4: Alvarez M-5 (1520-1526) 1881
MP5 Amhara MP5

and so receive absolution. They pray in the churches of 796
the canons as in those of the friars. Friars do not marry, [782]
canons and priests do so. When the canons live together 793
in the circuit they eat in their houses, and the friars eat in
community. The chiefs of these churches are called Lica-
canate. The wives of the canons have houses outside of the
circuit, where they go to live with them: the son of a
canon remains a canon, and the son of a priest not, except
he chooses later to become one. No tithes are paid to any
church, they live on the large properties which the churches
and monasteries possess. Complaints against the clergy [694]
are dealt with before the secular justice.

The vestment is made like a shirt, and the stole with a 292
hole in the middle, and put over the head; they have no
maniple, nor amice, nor girdle; priests and friars all have [302]
their heads shaved, and the beards not. The friars say
mass with their hats on their heads, and the priests with
their heads bare.

In no church is more than one mass said, and no mass is 794 ●
said for alms, not even for the dead. When any person dies,
the priests come with cross and holy water and incense,
and recite certain prayers for him, and carry him off to
burial very hurriedly: next day they bring offerings: the
churchyards are all closed, so that nothing can enter them.

Prester John has no determined place of abode, he 643
always goes about the country in tents, and he will always
have in his camp five or six tents among good and common
ones: and there will always be at Court of people for the 644
horses and mules from fifty thousand upwards.

The kitchen of Prester John is a good crossbow shot
behind his quarters, and they bring his food in this manner:
all that he has to eat comes in porringers and dishes of
very black earthenware on wooden trays, and pages bring
them, and above the pages come a pallium of silk, which
covers them so that these viands come with reverence.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

than the Abuna. There are, after these, chief priests and scribes, as in the Jewish church: the last of these, the ignorant, careless copiers of the holy scriptures. 793

The monks here do not live in convents, as in Europe, but in separate houses round their church, and each cultivates a part of the property they have in land. The priests have their maintenance assigned to them in kind, and do not labour. A steward, being a layman, is placed among them by the king, who receives all the rents belonging to the churches, and gives to the priests the portion that is their due; but neither the Abuna, nor any other churchman, has any business with the revenues of churches, nor can touch them. 793 794

The articles of the faith of the Abyssinians have been inquired into and discussed with so much keenness in the beginning of this century, that I fear I should disoblige some of my readers were I to pass this subject without notice. 175 779

Their first bishop, Frumentius, being ordained about the year 333, and instructed in the religion of the Greeks of the church of Alexandria by St Athanasius, then sitting in the chair of St Mark, it follows, that the true religion of the Abyssinians, which they received on their conversion to Christianity, is that of the Greek church; and every rite, or ceremony, in the Abyssinian church may be found and traced up to its origin in the Greek church, while both of them were orthodox.

Frumentius preserved Abyssinia untainted with heresy till the day of his death. We find, from a letter preserved in the works of St Athanasius, that Constantius, the heretical Greek emperor, wished St Athanasius to deliver him up, which that patriarch refused to do: indeed, at that time, it was not in his power.

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

gre, drinks out of a golden cup, as keeper of the law at Axum. There are 12 nagareets in Tigre, and forty-four persons are invested with the Ras-werk. 644

Church affairs. The Abuna is appointed by proclamation of the king, and is deposed at his pleasure. He holds of no other person. He ordains priests and deacons within the kingdom, consecrates churches, altars (tabot), &c. His revevenue was once very considerable, esteemed one-third of the revenues of the kingdom; but as those princes, who made the grants, resided in Shoa, or in the south of Tigre, the principal lands are in those provinces, adjoining to the royal residence. Now, the southern provinces are all in the hands of the Galla, as well as part of Tigre, and the governor, or Ras, has assumed the rest; so that of 400 oz. of gold once paid by Tigre, the Abuna, in my time, got only twenty-five, one-third of which went to the king's wakeel in his house. The Abuna appoints no officer, civil, or ecclesiastical; the king, or governor, does all. The king appoints officers, called Alaka, who administer in all cases the revenue of churches and convents; and this person is the judge of differences and suits among the priests and monks of his church, or fraternity, from whom lies no appeal but to the King, or to the Ras, who is understood to represent him. This Alaka is, or is not, a monk, or priest, at the king's pleasure. Of those who are called monks, are the communities of Debra Libanos, or Azazo, as it is now called, Waldubba, Werkleva, Damo, Mahabar Selasse, &c. These live in villages in these places, and reside or not as they please. The rest of that name are those who are ordained on any illness, disappointment, or advanced in life. The monks are ordained by the Itchegue, the others by any ordinary priest. Neither take any vow. The women of Waldubba are of the first kind, and all women past pleasure compose the second. There are many instances of both orders renouncing and marrying. 793 794

All persons, as well ecclesiastical as civil, are subject to the same laws, judgment, and tribunal, without exception, be the cause of whatever nature it may be. The Abuna, or Itchegue, have none of them a tribunal, nor can they take cognizance of any cause; especially the Abuna, who has, as I have said, an officer in his house appointed by the king, who pu- 692

5: Bruce T-5 (1768-1773) 1804
MP5 Amhara MP5

principal revenue of the clergy is the presents made by The 794 ● those who are sick, or dying.

The dress of the Acab saat is a purple burnoose, with a 292 white turban, not unlike the Turkish Imams, or a white handkerchief hanging loose behind. The Kees hatze is the king's official confessor, official Alaka of the church of Tecla-haimanout, and curator of the two churches of Gondar.

The Abuna's words of absolution, in a case of excommunication, is, "Gzier ephtac," God absolve thee. [783]

Women, after having born a son, are excluded from the 796 church 40 days, and if a daughter, 80. The really married 784 are those who receive the sacrament on that occasion. Persons who have been connected with any woman, are excluded from church during three days; if that connection has been promiscuous, they are excluded seven; and then even admitted to receive the sacrament. If a man, really married, is guilty with another's wife, he is not debarred a longer period. Women in the menses are not allowed to enter the [841] church till seven days afterwards. Circumcision is performed on the eight, and baptism is celebrated on the forty-first [304] day of the child's age. On all the fore-mentioned occa- [852] sions they only come within the inner precinct, and kiss the walls and door-posts of the church. The clergy are rigid in these matters, and that is, perhaps, one of the reasons why the churches are ill-attended. It is their only duty; the monks making no scruple of confessing that they cannot enter the church, for that day they had to do with a woman, which is not attended with any impeachment.

Geography and revenue of Abyssinia.—The Iteghe from Bure 131 in two days arrived at Metchakel, in her way to Gojam: It 361 may be about as far as from this (Gondar) to Caroota; I suppose from 30 to 32 miles at farthest. From Metchakel to Nazarit six days easy journey; from 10 to 12 miles, I suppose, *per diem*. Gojam here belongs to Ayto Aylo, son of Ozoro Welleta Israel. The Galla are Toluma. The Galla 101 who border on Amhara are much the worst of all the Galla, and the least worst are the Edjow east of them, bordering upon Begemder and Angot, called Guangoul Galla. Those near Amhara are Wetchali, Woolo, Amito, and Toluma;

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

soldiers. He would also have, like the Emperor, official estates set aside for the upkeep of his large household and it would be these he would be most anxious to retain if he lost his governorship. For these estates he could call up the labour of soldiers and *gabars*.[1] Parkyns recorded in the mid-nineteenth century that for his estates the governor could exact one day's work for clearing, one for sowing, two for cleaning, and two for harvesting, and this was still the custom in this century.[2] Instead of cultivating his estates directly by using labour in this way, the governor might lease his land to tenants who would pay him a stated proportion of the crop as rent. According to one authority in the north, governors claimed that one tenth of all privately owned land should also be cultivated for him and he would himself choose the lands. Where, as in Tigré, the governorship tended to remain for a period in the same family this was not so grave an injury to the province, but if a governor from outside were sent in the people might not dare to demand back the lands from the ... al family and were obliged to set aside new lands for their new governor.[3] Besides the governor's estates there would be others attached to the various offices of his assistants.

In addition to their more regular dues from the people it was customary for governors and their assistants to demand special gifts from time to time, such as a sheep from each village at Easter and at the festival of the true cross.

THE CHURCH AND THE ARMY

The Emperors were always extremely generous to the church, even if they had not gone so far as to allocate that third of the original legend which the famous cleric Takla Haimanot claimed in 1270. Every priest, monk, *debtera*, and deacon, in so far as he was excused from the work of the fields, required that land furnished with slaves or *gabars* should be set aside for his support. A vast total of land was burdened with this service. The piety of Emperors warred here with their political interests—at one moment they were moved to give, at another to resume their gifts. But it was not easy to assert the royal claim against monasteries which were undying corporations or against churches which needed permanent endowment and were, moreover, served by priests determined to pass on their lands with their offices to their sons. Moreover, the very character of the grants protected them. Their most

[1] Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–91.
[2] Parkyns, M., *Life in Abyssinia*, 1853, vol. 2, p. 230. Also Walker, *op. cit.*, p. 191.
[3] Rossini, pp. 107–8.

7: Perham S-4 (no date)1948
MP5 Amhara MP5

784 423 651 frequent form was that of *samonanya*, lands given to support the service of the mass. The Emperors had granted much *gult* to the churches and thus gave them the power to keep all the royal tribute from it and even to administer justice and to retain its proceeds. Even where this grant had not been made as *rest-gult* it was not easy to regain control of it and the convention was that, when such land was taken back by the Emperor, an equivalent estate should be granted.[1]

It should be remembered that land was not held collectively by the church but, as in England, by the individual 'parish' churches or monasteries or by the Abuna and the *Ichegé*, who between them held very large estates, and by other ecclesiastics.

701 423 Military service, regarded in this chapter from the aspect of land tenure, was a universal obligation upon land unless the land was held by the church and specially exempted. The obligation was on the land rather than on the person, so that if a woman held a piece of land which had to supply soldiers it was her duty to raise and equip them. There were many different kinds of military tenure because each type of service was attached to special pieces of land and called by different names which need not be listed here. There was, for example, land which supplied the following services—the fusilier, the artilleryman, the muleteer, the porter transporting baggage, the bearer of the red tent or the Emperor's tent poles, the makers of gunpowder, the quartermaster, the forager, and many other military needs. It was even specially laid down for each piece of land whether its soldiers should fight in the centre or the left or right wings of the army.[2]

Estates would have to give the service of soldiers in varying numbers from the single man to a thousand or more. Those who owed these large numbers were, of course, very important people, and in Shoa at least it was probable that the man liable for a thousand would be a holder of *gult* over a considerable area.[3] Parcels of land might be allotted to 'regular' soldiers to support them while on service, or given as a reward for service, generally with a continuing obligation to provide a soldier of some special type.

It will be seen that there was no uniform system for the raising or support of the soldiers, especially as these were serving different masters. Thus in one province there might be part of the Emperor's army as well as the governor's provincial army, while both the latter and his district governors would have their personal bodyguards. Though in the north the serving soldiers were generally supported out of the tithes, they might be quartered directly upon the people or given lands of their

[1] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, pp. 611–13.
[2] Walker, *op. cit.*, pp. 189–90.
[3] Guèbrè Sellassié, vol. 2, p. 612; also de Castro, pp. 281 ff.

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
MP5 Amhara MP5

793 Menelik, who made the Abouna supreme head of all matters; the *Itcheque* second with residence at the great national monastery of Debra Libanos; and the High Priest third in the hierarchy.

794 The wealth and influence of the Church are enormous, a state of affairs due to the prescience of Tekla
793 Haimanot, to whom reference has already been made.
792 This remarkable man is supposed to have negotiated the restoration of the Solomonean line after three hundred years of deposition, and his modest price seems to have been a perpetual grant to the Church of one-third of the country. As a result the extent of the Church lands is tremendous: not only do monasteries, convents, and churches cover the country but great areas belong to them, and the revenues accruing therefrom are utilized to maintain an almost unbelievable number of monks, priests, and *debtera*. The numbers of these people were given to me by Abyssinians as over a million—this is of course absurd—but I was assured on good authority that over a quarter of the male population are included in these categories of parasites. And parasites they are, for they serve no useful purpose and exist on the taxes raised from the people working on the land: they do no work themselves and are even exempted from military service. They are on the whole ignorant and illiterate, for while some of them can read, very few indeed can write.

793 Monks are not supposed to marry: priests are
792 allowed to marry once, and in fact do so: *debtera* are free as laymen; but I do not think that the lives of many of them could profitably be held up as examples for the people to follow.

793 No examination and little or no preparation seem

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
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age-long enemies and should allow them to profess their faith openly as they do, when one considers the havoc wrought by Moslem invasions and Galla inroads.

Even the Falasha Jewish ironworkers in the north, who are doubly regarded with dislike and suspicion as being Jews and as being possessed of supernatural powers, are treated with tolerance, though avoided.

No doubt this happy result is contributed to so far as Moslems are concerned by the fact that in Abyssinia they do not appear to be strict or fanatical—in pleasing contrast to their behaviour elsewhere. Mr Wyman Bury tells a delightful story in exemplification of this latter frame of mind. A pilgrim to Mecca, a plump and prosperous Moslem merchant at Aden in ordinary life, was gazing from the deck of the ship in rapt enthusiasm at Jeddah, which against the sun-scorched country beyond looked like a stale bridecake on a dust-heap. "Oh, the sacred land," he crooned "the blessed land, where pigs and Christians cannot live."

The Abyssinians still have a church in Rome, a monastery in Jerusalem, and monasteries and Ethiopic texts were discovered in the Libyan desert by the German explorer Falls.

The Abyssinian Church endeavours to maintain friendly relations with the other Christian communities: interesting examples of this are the missions sent to the Pope by the Emperor Menelik in 1906 and by the late Empress in 1921. A mission was also in Jerusalem at the close of 1922 in connection with some ancient rights of the Abyssinian Church regarding the Church of the Holy Sepulchre and other holy places; under the Turkish régime these rights had been transferred to the

8: Rey G-5 (1910-1920)1935
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Coptic community. The present Emperor himself visited Jerusalem recently.

Possibly owing to ignorance and lack of education, the Church does not make any missionary efforts of its own amongst its subject races of Moslems and pagans, and up to recent years it did not tolerate, or at all events welcome, such efforts on the part of others. This is perhaps hardly surprising, for much of the missionary enterprise known to the Abyssinians had mingled politics with religious efforts, and had interfered in matters which had better have been left alone.

The Jesuits were expelled in 1633, and some who would not go were killed. The Protestant missionaries were expelled in 1838. Theodore can hardly have been said to have welcomed missionaries, though so far from expelling them he chained them up and would not let them go. King John expelled them again in 1886, and Menelik barely tolerated them, although a French mission has been established continuously in Tigré for a good many years.

But quite recently more missionaries have been allowed to start operations, especially in the Galla districts, and the Americans are particularly to the fore in this work in Addis Ababa and elsewhere. In addition, there is a French mission at Harrar and a convent at Addis Ababa, mainly educational and non-proselytizing, and a Swedish mission at the latter town of a similar character.

So far I do not think there is much trace of success by any of these institutions, but on the other hand there is evidence to shew (and my impressions are confirmed by American, Swedish, and French writers) that Islam, as in other parts of Africa, is making progress among

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

impressions conveyed by much of the literature on Ethiopia, is not a normal ecological unit in Amhara society.

Each homestead gives the appearance of self-sufficiency and autonomy, but it is bound to a wider social context in a number of ways. While satisfying most of its consumption needs by its own efforts, every household depends on the market for certain items. The highland peasants must go to market for their chili, onions, peppers, hops, and cotton; while lowland peasants must barter for barley and sheep there. Salt and foreign fabrics must be imported from afar, and iron and clay products must be bought from specialists who bring their wares. Limited needs for currency—chiefly for rifles and, since 1942, taxes—are also met at the market.

The markets normally are held once a week. Every homestead is within walking distance of at least one market; though often the trip may take several hours, at times the greater part of a day. Markets in the same region are often scheduled on different days, so that, for example, the family which misses the one five hours to the north on Saturday can catch another four hours to the south on Tuesday. The virtual absence of roads throughout the countryside makes travel to market slow and tedious, but wealthier peasants nonetheless manage to transport quantities of grain and livestock to the provincial capitals for better prices and a wider selection of consumers' goods.

The household is linked to a wider world politically as well as economically. By providing tithes, revenues, military service, and corvée labor, the peasant has traditionally been obliged to support an extensive political hierarchy. In return for this he has received an organization for defending the country against enemies, and a structure of legitimate authority sufficient to maintain order and settle disputes.

The peasant's relations with this political hierarchy have been mediated by the office of *chīqā shum*, a district headman. This office is circulated, usually annually, among a small number of men whose eligibility is based on their ownership of certain pieces of land. As the land passes from father to son, so does the eligibility for being *chīqā shum*.

Traditionally the *chīqā shum* was a role of considerable importance. It carried the duties of tax collection, adjudication, promulgation of official decrees, supervision of occasional work projects, levying of men for military service, and officiating at civil marriages and divorces. Through his work the *chīqā shum* received a variety of fees and bribes. In cases of flagrant misbehavior the local people were able to dismiss him from office. The reorganization of provincial administration since 1942 has deprived the *chīqā shum* of many of his former powers, but the office still exists and plays a modest role in peasant life.

The district over which a *chīqā shum* has authority is the closest thing to a village unit among the Amhara. It is usually coterminous with the area sur-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

622 rounding a local church, and therefore "parish" may be the more appropriate
621 term for it than village. The *chĭqā shum* and the local church authorities
794 work closely on occasion, particularly in connection with the construction and maintenance of church buildings.

*565 The church represents the third main link between the peasant hamlet and
79 the broader Abyssinian life. As the peasant depends on the local market to
182 mediate between his production unit and the external economy, and on the *chĭqā shum* to mediate between his domestic polity and the higher political authorities, so he depends on the local clergy to mediate between his home culture and the "high culture" of Abyssinia as embodied in the institutions of the Orthodox Church.

The peasant supports the church by following its main ritual requirements and by contributing, according to his means, a certain quantity of grain each year. If the peasant works land owned by the church, a considerable part of his produce is transmitted automatically to individual priests, or gifts are offered to the church according to the occasion. In return, the church symbolizes for him the integrity of his moral order and provides moral support during personal crisis.

*565 Such, in broad outline, is the structural setting of peasant life among the Amhara.

THE WORLD OF ACTIVITY

*565 *The Daily Round*
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Work begins in the peasant's home well before daybreak. His wife or maid-
[462] servant rises with the first cockcrow to grind grain. It is pitch dark as she feels
[252] her way across the earthen floor and begins to push and pull a large flat stone over little heaps of barley, wheat, or *tĕff*.

An hour or two later cold light seeps in through cracks in the door and, if it is in bad repair, the thatched roof. The noises of chickens and livestock
[782] become more audible, and the rest of the household begins to stir. The man of the house starts his day by reciting a prayer or, if he has some education,
[231] by reading a passage from some sacred text. Then he or one of the boys takes
[462] the oxen and cows out for breakfast, to a pile of hay in the yard or a spot of pasture rich with grass. Donkeys, mules, and perhaps horses are also sent to graze.

[372] One of the women pokes the embers that spent the night under a blanket of ash. She blows them into flame through a bamboo pipe, filling the room
[262] with smoke and her eyes with tears. Over the fire she sets a clay pot to warm
[252] up leftover pepper sauce. The peasant sits on a sheepskin spread over the clay
[352] bench that adjoins the wall. Water is poured from a gourd for him to wash
[515] his hands, and *ĭnjarā* and sauce are brought for his breakfast. He eats by him-
[264] self, slowly, pondering the work for the day.

5

THE OLD AND NEW ELITES

121 The disjunction between traditional and modernizing sectors that characterizes the socialization of adolescents informs most aspects of contemporary Ethiopian society. A modern institution of Western inspiration has nearly everywhere been superimposed upon traditional forms, and as yet there has been relatively little interaction between the two.

In the economy, subsistence production according to traditional techniques prevails throughout all Amhara areas. Production for national and international markets is funneled through separate channels: coffee lands and a few tobacco farms in the southern provinces, specialized commerce in a dozen or so provincial centers, and a small number of factories dependent mainly on non-Ethiopian management and, frequently, capital. In the legal realm varied forms of customary law remain authoritative for much provincial litigation, while civil, criminal, and maritime codes based on French and Swiss ideals have been enacted as the law of the nation. The governmental structure is similarly bifurcated, between local authorities who govern in the traditional manner, albeit with reduced powers, and a ministerial system and parliament based on European models. In the case of religious institutions there remains a wide gulf between the orientation of the Orthodox churches and that of such Western-inspired formations as the Theological College and the Orthodox Students Association.

This sociological dualism comes to a head in the system of social stratification.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

preme judges at the royal court, and the *aqābē sa'āt* ranked third—in some lists, first—in the official order of precedence of all court dignitaries.[40]

One other church dignitary, finally, was the *nebra ed*, chief of the sacred district of Aksum, who always enjoyed a high position at the royal court. When appointed by the emperor (instead of by the provincial governor who sometimes possessed that authority), the *nebra ed* enjoyed the rare privilege of being permitted to sit while speaking in the event of his involvement in litigation.

The status of the highest ecclesiastical dignitaries was based on approximately the same factors as those which determined the status of secular nobility: royal favor; family background, in the case of those whose fathers were important nobles or noted churchmen; and the possession of wealth, political power, and imposing titles.[41] The same was true of their regional counterparts, the *alaqā*, "chiefs" of large churches and monasteries, whose wealth, power, and leisurely mode of life gave them, in Plowden's opinion, "perhaps the most enviable position in Abyssinia."[42]

The status of the clergy as a whole, however, rested on three other principles which are not affected by royal favor, birth, or worldly possessions. These were: contact with the most sacred symbols of religious authority; ascetic piety; and religious learning. Broadly speaking, in Abyssinia these three principles have been embodied primarily in three distinct roles, namely, those of priest, monk, and *dabtārā*.

A normal preparation for these roles—necessarily so, in the case of the priesthood—is service as a deacon. Ability to read is, now as before, a requisite qualification for the diaconate, but that requirement has in the past often been overlooked. More important has been the requirement of ordination by the *abuna*. Ordination formerly took place in the company of hundreds of other aspirants and, when there was uncertainty about the future availability of an *abuna*, even babes in arms were admitted.[43]

The traditional garb of the deacon is a yellowish cape made of sheepskins, though on holidays the officiating deacons may be dressed in richly colored silk robes like the priests. The duties of the deacon—and they are accounted great and secret privileges—are to prepare the sacramental bread, fetch the holy water, and assist at the Mass (the performance of which normally requires two priests and three deacons).

On reaching puberty a deacon is no longer supposed to serve in the church, for fear that he will become "impure." At that time he may decide to prepare for the priesthood. For this two qualifications must be met. He must have completed his study of reading and, ideally, of *zēmā*, the chants that are intoned in the liturgy of the Mass. These matters he may learn from the older clergy during his service as a deacon, or from his father, who, in many cases, is a priest himself. Otherwise, he goes off in search of a master. He

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builds a tiny thatch hut near the home of his tutor, wears ragged, unsheared sheepskins, and gets his meals by begging. He lives thus for a year or two, until he has mastered the fourteen varieties of chants used in the various masses, and perhaps special chants like the *Praise of Mary* (*Weddāssē Māryām*) which are sung on holidays.

The other, and more important, qualification for the priesthood is marriage according to the law of the church. After a deacon has been married in the customary manner and lived with his wife for at least forty days, their marriage must be solemnized by the celebration of the Eucharist. Thereafter he may not divorce her or remarry if she dies.

With these conditions satisfied, the candidate for priesthood may travel to the *abuna* and be ordained. He acquires thereby the power to bind and to absolve, and is granted full knowledge of the mysteries of the *tābot*. The new priest attaches himself to a church, and is given his share of the monthly assignments for conducting the Mass. This is his main responsibility, though as he grows older he will also acquire confessants to whom he will give advice and assign penances.

Apart from these duties, the life of an Abyssinian priest in many ways resembles that of his lay neighbors. He plows his fields and harvests his crops. He may do business at the markets, or add to his income by weaving. Perhaps the chief difference in his manner of life is the habit of spending time in the "gate of peace," a little building near the church where the clergy assemble after services for hours of drinking *ṭallā* and idle conversation.

In reward for his services—and this is normally the chief inducement to become a priest—the priest is given a share of the revenues in kind brought in from lands owned and managed by the church. He may also be given some land owned by the church to cultivate for himself. In addition, he receives gifts in kind from his confessants periodically, is entitled to take part in the various feasts to which priests are regularly invited, and is likely to receive some bequest from time to time.*

The insignia of the priest are modest, but they suffice to inform the stranger that here is a man to be shown special respect: a white turban wrapped around the head and a cross carried in the hand, to be kissed by all comers. Older priests often carry a fly-whisk made of horsehair, and a wicker sun umbrella.

Though there are devout and kindly men among them, the Ethiopian priests have never been particularly noted for their moral qualities. Often they are ungenerous and scheming, and ready to exploit their position at the expense of the laity. They are poorly educated in their own tradition, stuttering

* A sheep, or at least a sheepskin—insurance that the Memorial Mass will be properly performed on the fortieth day after the donor's death.

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[p.194-8]

FIG. 27.—*A deacon*

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FIG. 28.—*Group of debtara*

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FIG. 29.—*An old priest*

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

the Amharic phrase *ya-kantu weddāsē zaman*—"the era of futile flattery."

For, whatever other aspects of modern culture they have identified with, the locals and returnees are seized with the promise of its first principle: dynamism.[62] Should they join forces, among themselves and with each other, they might create the effective intelligentsia which is indispensable for realizing this dynamism in action. They would play complementary, and equally necessary, parts; the locals contributing their greater drive and closeness to traditional society, the returnees their broader perspective and skepticism toward simplistic answers and total reforms.

There are numerous obstacles to such a progressive development. Some of them represent the persistence among the intellectuals of a number of traditional pan-Abyssinian characteristics which inhibit both the exercise of creative leadership and the capacity for solidary action. The traditional context of these characteristics will be discussed in the chapters which follow. The most conspicuous obstacle, however, has been the manner in which the Ethiopian government has sought to integrate the intellectuals in the social system. This is the subject to which we now turn.

The Role of the Government

In the hierarchy of values which sustained the traditional Abyssinian social order, that of the transcendental religious orientation represented by the Orthodox Church may be said to have held the paramount position. This is the sense in which, as has so often been remarked, religion has been Abyssinia's only truly unifying factor throughout the centuries. Religious charisma transferred from foreign sanctuaries—the mythical Ark of the Covenant brought from Jerusalem and the archbishop periodically imported from Egypt—provided the ultimate source of legitimacy in the society, upholding the authority of a sacred Christian monarch, church-defending warlords, and a numerous and functionally differentiated clergy. It so penetrated the social system that the basic unit of Abyssinian civil life was in fact a religious one, the parish.

In retrospect it would seem that the most profound aspect of Haile Selassie's accomplishment has been to dislodge the transcendental religious value from highest place and to replace it with the system-integrative value of loyalty to the emperor.[63] His mission has been above all a secularizing one. To accomplish it he has had greatly to increase his political and economic resources; but insofar as his regime has been accepted, and not based exclusively on sheer power—which to some extent is certainly the case—the paramount value in Ethiopia under Haile Selassie has become loyalty to the emperor as a symbol of the whole society. The autonomous significance of the church has been reduced; its extra-Ethiopian source of charisma has been cut off, and its func-

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

191 155 rhythm and rhyme of words as an epicure with a palatable viand or intoxicating old wine. . . . Like the infant, his affective state can only be pacified through a rhythmical expression of pleasurable sounds.[8]

The Amharic language itself registers a certain sensibility to the nature of poetry as an oral outlet. Agreeable and pleasing language is characterized in Amharic by the same word which is used to characterize particularly pleasing food: "*tāfata*" ("it is sweet"). The introduction to the *Chronicles* of Emperor [589] Galawdewos is but the literary embellishment of a type of statement which could be made by any Amhara:

> We commence here this beautiful narrative, of more pleasing taste to the mouth . . . than honey and sugar, which will bring pleasure to those who hear it and will give, to those who understand it, a joy like that given by song and wine.[9]

155 828 [826] The incorporation of knowledge no less than the enjoyment of words is conceived in explicitly oral terms in Amharic. The stomach is regarded as the seat of wisdom, and in the language of schoolboys the diligent student is one who has thoroughly "drunk his lesson." The experiencing of one's school as an Alma Mater is probably quite intense; as one tenth-grade student wrote in a contribution to his school newspaper, "Oh! Mother School! There is nothing like school! As a mother feeds her children with milk and bread, so does a school feed her children, the pupils, with education."[10]

155 261 574 527 [575] [794] Eating and drinking for their own sake, beyond what is required for nutrition, form perhaps the most obvious medium for oral erotism, and one that is cultivated to a notable degree among the Amhara. Feasting is called for on every possible occasion—christenings, funerals, and memorial services, as well as engagements, weddings, and annual holidays. The chief purpose of the only voluntary association in traditional Amhara society, the religious fraternal association known as the *māhebar,* is to eat and drink in honor of a certain saint on his day every month. The duration of any large celebration is said to depend on how long the food and drink last; successful ones go on for three days. Linguistic usage stresses the oral function on such occasions. One "eats at," rather than attends, a christening party; one "drinks in," rather than belongs to, a *māhebar;* one expects to "eat at," rather than dance at, somebody's wedding. The very word for Easter, "*Fāsiqā*," literally means "great feast."

155 261 264 The activity of eating is colored by a number of conventions which express its great emotional significance. The mood at mealtime is supposed to be deeply serious. Food is to be masticated aloud, indicating a total involvement with the task at hand. Not to let others hear one chewing, like eating by oneself, also is taken to imply greed. The usual obligation to stand when somebody enters the room is waived when one is eating. "Grain is king," says an

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

proverb which stresses the rights of women in this regard gives the following advice:

Balāgar sitagub yemastāl ba-degger;
Tayawennā nay qitāwen yegāgger.

When a peasant gets sated he beats you with wood;
Leave and come home, let him bake his own bread!

A couple who have firmly decided upon divorce need simply call in their relatives or go before the *çhīqā shum* in order to have their property properly divided. The only recourse to judicial process is when, as often happens, disputes break out concerning the division of property. In the *damoz* form of marriage, in which there is no civil oath, divorce is yet simpler. The wife is given certain presents and a monthly salary for the duration of the marriage. When the husband has to leave for another part of the country, or if the couple quarrel, they simply separate without further ado.

Despite its heavy claim on the energies of its members, then, the Amhara kinship system is such as to make members of the nuclear family relatively independent of extended relationships, and to give the individual marriage partners important areas of independence from each other.

Religious Organization

Membership in the Monophysite Church is automatic for all Amhara except a small percentage who are Muslim. This membership is symbolized by the ceremony of baptism, performed for male infants on the fortieth day and for females on the eightieth. At that time the child receives a special Christian name in addition to his regular family name.

Certain obligations are incumbent upon every member of the church. Foremost among these is the requirement of fasting, which begins for children of both sexes at about the age of seven and introduces a considerable element of constraint into the lives of the Amhara. Second, there is the obligation to observe the Sabbaths and the main holidays by refraining from arduous physical labor on those days. In addition, each household is obliged to contribute a certain quantity of grain to the local church every year.*

Apart from the rigorous fasting requirements, and the injunction not to work on holy days—a dubious hardship—the individual is relatively free of ritual obligations. The rituals demanded by the church are so manifold, and so sacred, that responsibility for them is given to the clergy, and the laymen

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*In some areas this is a fixed amount per household (e.g., one or two *quana*); in others it is proportionate to the wealth of the family. It is collected by a lay official of the church, the *gend alaqā*, though sometimes by the *gabaz*.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

*121 • 794 795 are left free to a large extent. Since every day of the month except the thirtieth is sanctified by dedication to some saint, Mass must be performed virtually *121 79 every day, a norm which is actually fulfilled by churches which have a numerous clergy. The burden for individual clergymen is kept small by a system of rotation. The average parish church will have services perhaps ten to fifteen times a month, which is still too often for heavy popular attendance. Even on Sundays and the most important holidays, when the laity are expected to attend, their participation is excused by other considerations. Those who have eaten earlier in the day, who have had sexual relations the night before, or who are harboring a grudge in their "stomach" are not even supposed to come to church. If they do come, they sit outside the wall chatting with one another while the Mass is performed inside.

*121 794 795 783 Customs concerning Communion and Confession likewise give the individual a wide range of freedom. Partaking of the Communion is not required of anyone; the experience simply is available to those who are ritually pure (children, and those who have married by the *querbān*), if they are so inclined. Confession is not mandatory, but according to personal inclination. Every man has the right to choose his own personal confessor or "soul-father," though if satisfied with the one of his father, he may retain him. (A woman adopts the confessor of her husband.) The soul-father's advice may be sought when a problem arises. If a man sins—breaks the fast, works on a holiday, commits theft or murder—he is supposed to confess. If he chooses to do so, the soul-father will prescribe a certain penance—fasting an extra amount, sleeping on the floor for a period, giving something to the poor or to the church. But the initiative is entirely up to the sinner and probably more often than not he keeps the offense to himself. The proportion of Amhara who keep every fast strictly, go to church a few times a month, and confess their transgressions to the soul-father is small; in the estimate of one Amhara informant, less than five per cent.

*121 794 575 Still greater permissiveness may be observed in connection with the religious fraternal associations known as the *māhebar*. The *māhebar* consists of a group of people from the same general area, usually of the same sex, who meet once a month on the day devoted to the saint for whom the association is named. The place of meeting rotates among the homes of the members, and the soul-father of the host is always present to bless the occasion. The meetings consist of much eating, drinking, and conviviality. Membership in a *māhebar* is purely voluntary, and the individual who wishes to join one usually has a choice among several in a given area.*

For the Amhara laity, then, a few burdensome ritual and fiscal constraints

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[735] * There is a variant of the *māhebar* known as the *senbaṭ*, whose members take turns in providing food for the clergy and poor folk on Sundays.

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are balanced by a fairly permissive mode of organization. For the clergy, the constraints are heavier; the fasting requirements are increased, and the priesthood involves, as we have seen, strict marital fidelity. On the other hand, the individualistic organization of the clergy is most striking.

This individualism is conspicuous already in the church schools, which are organized not on a class basis but in a series of master-pupil relations. Students begin their courses of study whenever they arrive at the residence of the master, and proceed each at his own pace. The master spends the bulk of his time with more advanced students, who in turn are used to instruct the less advanced. The pupils are very much on their own, uncontrolled either by their families, with whom they no longer reside, nor by any formal institution. The same is true of the masters, who are not subjected to any sort of outside controls. Indeed, each teacher tends to develop his own unique method of teaching, regarding it as something of a personal monopoly.[34]

The ministrating clergy are likewise free from controls emanating from a broad ecclesiastical organization. Each parish church functions autonomously under the direction of a head (*alaqā*) chosen by the local clergy. (Heads of the most important churches have traditionally been appointed by the emperor.) The obligations of the priesthood are not very great. The chief duty of the priest is to take his turn in performing the Mass. His pastoral services are limited to occasional visits with his particular confessants, from whom he expects to receive regular rewards of food and drink. Otherwise, his life is much the same as that of his lay neighbors.

The role of the *dabtarā*, as we have seen, is still more flexible. *Dabtarā* who are associated with a parish church are expected to take their turns singing hymns and composing *qenē* in the outer ring of the church; but otherwise they exist as free entrepreneurs, and they need not be so attached unless they so desire.

The individualistic organization of the Ethiopian Church is most striking, perhaps, in the case of the monks, especially when compared with Christian monastic orders in the Western world. Ethiopian monks are bound by nothing other than the original conditions for assuming the role, namely, renouncing family ties and worldly possessions. The monk need not enter a monastery; he may continue to live in his old home or may take to the woods as a hermit. If he does go to live at a monastery, his life is not radically changed. The Ethiopian monastery is not an organized community, but a sacred place—the site of a large and important church, in the vicinity of which live numbers of individual monks. The monk comes and goes as he wishes, prays whenever he wants, and may live free of any obligations toward his fellow monastics and toward the rest of the society.*

* There are, however, some monasteries where a more organized and disciplined regime may be found.

11:Levine Z-4,5 (1958-1961)1965 MP5 Amhara MP5

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omy during the past two decades, represents a significant growth of the capacity for voluntary formal organization in the modernizing sector.[41]

575 185 178 [794]

Māhebar (*Regional Associations*).—A type of formal association which has sprung up in Addis Ababa in recent years, becoming popular for the first time around 1960, is known as the *māhebar*. While its name is taken from the traditional Orthodox fraternal association, in aims and organization it is different from the religious *māhebar*. While the latter is devoted to honoring one of the saints and is convened primarily for feasting and sociability, the modern *māhebar* is organized on the basis of territorial or tribal bonds and is concerned with problems of social betterment. The first *māhebar* of this kind was established by the Gurage in the fifties.* Thereafter, the idea spread to members of other groups, and Addis Ababa residents originating in Gondar, Tigre, Harar, Manz, Tagulat, Fitche and elsewhere began to form *māhebar* of their own. The basic idea behind all these *māhebar* is to make some contribution to the welfare of the provinces through projects voluntarily financed and organized by fellow-countrymen living in the metropolis. These projects have included construction of roads, schools, and hospitals; supplying books for schools; and provision of facilities for assisting inhabitants of the provinces who come to the city. Members of the various *māhebar* convene weekly or biweekly, usually on Sunday in the vicinity of one or another of the Addis Ababa churches, to discuss their projects and make their financial contributions.

[797]

Formal Associations of Foreign Inspiration

575 794 178

Student Associations.—The Orthodox Students Association was founded in 1958 by a convention representing all the colleges and some of the secondary schools. Its successful establishment was due in large part to the efforts of an Indian Orthodox minister who at the time was one of the Emperor's private secretaries. There is some evidence that an earlier spontaneous effort to form such a group in the early fifties was checked by the government. Members of this association have been concerned with adapting the activities of the church to contemporary needs. They criticize the established church for its use of a dead language, excessive ritualism, and lack of teaching; and have proposed that the Orthodox Church should institute Sunday schools and

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* The Gurage *māhebar* remains in a class of its own, with respect to size, wealth, and ambitiousness of program. The Gurage have also pointed the way to using the *māhebar* form in a way that transcends the narrow tribal or territorial passions which it has thus far tended to canalize. This has been done through the establishment of another, project-oriented *māhebar* concerned solely with building a road from Alam Gana to Wollamo Soddo, whose membership includes Galla and Wollamo as well as Gurage. This association has already collected well over a million dollars, and has completed the construction of a bridge. It is headed by a capable Gurage army general and its activities and collections are reported regularly in the Addis Ababa press.

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cultivate a missionary spirit in order to reach the non-Christian peoples of Ethiopia. The association sponsors weekly religious services, featuring hymns in Amharic and talks in Amharic on religious and moral questions, and publishes a monthly journal. The Orthodox Students Association stands out as the first nationwide voluntary association in Ethiopia. It holds an annual convention which draws some three hundred students from all parts of the country.

The Ethiopian College Students Association was established in 1960 after some years of patient maneuvering by officers of the various college student governments. It attempts to represent the interests and needs of students vis-à-vis the government and to handle relations with international student organizations.

A number of student clubs have appeared from time to time within the framework of the colleges. One of the most popular and productive of these has been the Ethnological Society of the University College, founded in the early fifties by a Polish member of the college staff. Over the years it has produced several issues of an ethnological bulletin. More recently, under the framework of the new university, dramatic and choral groups have been established as well as groups like the Education Students Association and the Economics Students Association. Graduates of some of the secondary schools and colleges, moreover, have formed a small number of alumni associations.

Labor Unions.—Although Ethiopia has for some time been a paying member of the ILO, the government has until recently strongly opposed the establishment of unions in the country. Nevertheless, due to the encouragement of labor representatives from Western and other African countries, as well as to the courageous efforts of a number of Ethiopians, several unions have at last been established and have won some degree of recognition from the government.* Trade unions were first attempted among employees of the Franco-Ethiopian Railroad and in Eritrea.[42] They now include employees of a number of factories. Even household servants have formed associations that establish minimal conditions which members are obliged to demand from their employers.

Professional Associations.—The Ethiopian Teachers Association, with a large paper membership but scarcely any activity, was the only professional association in Ethiopia prior to the 1960 rebellion. If one may generalize from the frustrated attempts of Ethiopian doctors to establish a medical association, it would seem that the government was attempting to discourage groups of this sort as well as trade unions. Since 1961, however, the picture has changed. There now exists not only a medical association, which publishes its own

* A law establishing a legal basis for labor unions was enacted by the Ethiopian parliament in 1962.

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The labor movement, limited as it is, has been in the hands of Eritreans on the one hand, and primarily non-Amhara workers in the south. Student associations have been formed chiefly at the instigation and under the aegis of foreign staff members; though here, as with the professional associations, modernized Amhara have sometimes played a leading role.

Once the new associations had been introduced, the Amhara like other Ethiopians were quick to adopt and expand them. Their participation in these new associations, however, has been affected, as might be expected, by the intrusion of traditional behavior patterns. Three examples of such behavior patterns come readily to mind.

(1) While the *equb* is conceived as a kind of credit union and as a focus for communal sociability, the *co-operative* sentiment tends to be lacking among members of Amhara *equb*, at least those of which the author has any knowledge. For example, in case of dire need, an *equb* member who desires the lump sum out of turn may be forced to *buy* the amount from the weekly winner, sometimes by forfeiting as much as ten or twenty per cent of the amount. By capitalizing on the crises of others, some enterprising *equb* members are able to sell their successful claims several times. Furthermore, in the early years of their existence, *equb* were frequently faced with the problem created by members who won the money early in the cycle, left town with the money, and did not return to pay their later installments. This difficulty has been met to some extent by the requirement of securing one or two guarantors for each person who enters an *equb*, but problems of this nature have led to altercations that have brought many *equb* members into court.

(2) The behavior of members of Amhara territorial *māhebar* is essentially that of a traditional social or civil gathering. The big men are seated in places of honor; the rest of the people stand quietly by. After a protracted period of exchanging greetings and milling about, the crowd listens respectfully while one or more of the big men makes a statement, and perhaps exchanges a few words with the group's secretary; and then the gathering disbands. Although the *māhebar* is organized with respect to the attainment of specific goals, the substance of the meetings is instumental to a very slight degree. The assembly rarely involves a meeting of minds to discuss an issue or a common problem, or to work out a program of action; but exists primarily as an occasion for the resonance of primordial sentiments by virtue of shared territorial attachments.

(3) In all associations, finally, certain traditional characteristics which are incongruent with the optimum conduct of groups come to the fore. This is no less true of the modern-educated than of the traditionals. Members fail to come on time to arranged meetings or neglect to come altogether.* They

* The *equb* has attempted to check this pattern by imposing fines on members who come late.